



# SIERRA CLUB

*Connecticut Chapter*  
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## **Testimony Before the Environment Committee February 25, 2022**

Dear Environment Committee Chairs Cohen and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Slap and Palm, Ranking Members Harding and Miner, and distinguished members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Sierra Club and our more than 40,000 members and supporters in Connecticut, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on several bills before you today.

The Sierra Club is committed to defending everyone's right to a healthy world by tackling the serious challenges of a warming climate, unprecedented levels of pollution, the waste management crisis, biodiversity loss, and the dangers of toxics. Fossil fuels are the main driver of climate change as well as unhealthy air, and therefore our most powerful tool to address both is to create a rapid and equitable transition away from fossil fuels to clean and renewable energy across all sectors of our economy. Plastic is contributing to the climate crisis and, along with hard to recycle materials, the waste management crisis. The climate crisis, pollution, toxic chemicals, overharvesting, and loss of habitat are threatening the biodiversity of the state and our planet. Toxics are also threatening the health and well-being of our residents, particularly children.

We must do much, much more than has been done to date or that is proposed today to address these issues with real solutions.

### **SB 118- An Act Concerning the Use of Certain Polystyrene Products**

Sierra Club Connecticut supports SB 118, with recommendations to strengthen and allow for local efforts to further eliminate plastic waste in our communities. The amount of plastic that contaminates our land and waterways is extremely concerning. It is a threat to our wildlife and ecosystems, and to the health of our citizens. The production of plastic items contributes greatly to greenhouse gas emissions that are warming our atmosphere and causing the climate crisis that is already upon us.

Expanded polystyrene (EPS) is not recyclable here in the state and does not break down in the natural environment.<sup>1</sup> It breaks up into "microplastics" polluting our waterways and threatening marine life. They are a single use item that contributes significantly to our already overburdened waste stream, ending up at the incinerators in Hartford, Bridgeport, and other cities in our state and adding to municipal waste management costs. Many municipalities have already banned EPS food containers, including Groton, Norwalk, Stamford, and Westport. New York State has also passed a ban as well.

Our recommendations to strengthen this bill include expanding the definition of polystyrene food service product, amend the date in section (2) line 20 to July 2023, and ensure that any statewide ban does not preempt municipalities from passing their own policies regarding EPS that may be stronger than what the state prescribes.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acssuschemeng.9b06635>



## **SB 120- An Act Concerning the Use of Chlorpyrifos on Golf Courses and Neonicotinoids for Nonagricultural Use**

Sierra Club Connecticut supports SB 120. In 2015, the EPA recommended a full ban of the neuro-toxic pesticide Chlorpyrifos. Chlorpyrifos has devastating impacts on our health, children's developing brains, and our environment. It is an extremely dangerous chemical linked to autism, ADD, and other neurodevelopmental issues in children.<sup>2</sup> It has been shown to reduce the working memory and IQ of children that were exposed, as well as associated with a wide variety of physical brain abnormalities.<sup>3</sup> It has also been linked to reproductive effects on both men and women, and an increased risk of Parkinson's disease. It is also toxic to honeybees, second only to Neonicotinoids and harmful to fish, birds and other wildlife.<sup>4</sup> It has been banned in New York, California and Hawaii, and in the EU.

The federal government has banned chlorpyrifos on food crops, but 90% of its usage in CT is on golf courses. This puts workers on and communities near golf courses at high risk for exposure to this dangerous chemical. Decades of research has proven that there is no safe amount of chlorpyrifos for any use. There are a variety of alternatives to using chlorpyrifos, including heat treatments, fatty-acid soap, electrical currents, boric acid, and botanical pesticides.<sup>5</sup> The use of chlorpyrifos is dangerous and unnecessary.

Neonicotinoids are a neurotoxic pesticide linked to massive bee and insect losses around the globe and increasingly to vast water and soil contamination, ecosystem-wide harms, and human health concerns. SB 120 would prohibit these wasteful uses on residential landscapes such as lawns and golf courses.

Neonicotinoids are the most widely used insecticide in the world and have made agriculture 48 times more harmful to insects since before their introduction.<sup>6</sup> They permeate plants turning their nectar, pollen and fruit toxic. They persist in soil so they get carried away from rain or irrigation water, contaminating the water, soil, and plants.

Neonicotinoids kill bees. Beekeepers lost 65.7% of their colonies last year, suggesting catastrophic losses across the board for CT native bee species<sup>7</sup>. These losses threaten ecosystems and our food system, as pollinators pollinate crops like apples, tomatoes, blueberries, strawberries, and cherries.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.regulations.gov/document/EPA-HQ-OPP-2015-0653-0454>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3237355/#r47>

<sup>4</sup> <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0077547>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.beyondpesticides.org/assets/media/documents/alternatives/factsheets/alts%20to%20chlorpyrifos.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/insect-apocalypse-under-way-toxic-pesticides-agriculture>

<sup>7</sup> See Bee Informed Partnership, Colony Loss Map, <https://bit.ly/2HpheoW>, and select "Annual" under the "Season" menu.



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Neonicotinoids kill birds. The large declines in U.S. bird species have been linked to Neonics, 30% in the last 50 years.<sup>8</sup> One neonic-treated seed is enough to kill some songbirds and at low doses they can harm a bird's immune systems, fertility and navigation, and cause rapid weight loss. Loss of insect populations affects the birds' ability to feed themselves and their young. They have also been shown to harm endangered species, fish, deer, and other wildlife.

Neonics may also harm human health. The US Center for Disease Control and Prevention shows that half the U.S. population is regularly exposed to Neonics and there is concerning research linking them to potential neurological, developmental, and reproductive harms, including malformations of the developing heart and brain.<sup>9</sup> Their residue commonly contaminates produce and baby food. It is beyond concerning.

We must ban both these chemicals from golf courses and nonagricultural use to protect Connecticut's residents' health, wildlife, and ecosystems.

### **HB 5139 An Act Concerning Extended Producer Responsibility for Tires**

Sierra Club Connecticut supports the spirit of this bill but has some concerns with language in section one. Disposal of tires is often difficult, costly, and lack of resources to do so contributes to roadside litter and illegal dumping. Requiring tire manufacturers to be responsible for the entire life cycle of their product is a great step towards reducing the strain tire disposal puts on individuals, municipalities, and on our environment. It also will create more jobs and a growing industry.

One of our concerns lies in section one (7) lines 22-26, it stipulates that the organization will be a nonprofit organization created by tire producers and trade associations that represent producers of tires. There is no mention of the environmental organizations or health experts being part of the stewardship organization. They cannot be left out of the conversation, considering how toxic tires are.

Another concern is in section one (11) lines 45-48, there is no mention of a requirement to protect human health when planning the recycling of tires. There is no requirement that the recycling of tires cannot include any marketable product or products that can negatively affect human health. In the past, people's health was put at risk when shredded tires were used on playgrounds and athletic fields. The potential toxicity of recycled tire products must be addressed.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/08/200814131023.htm>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/jennifer-sass/neonic-pesticides-potential-risks-brain-and-sperm>



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## **HB 5142 An Act Concerning Extended Producer Responsibility for Certain Gas Cylinders**

Sierra Club Connecticut supports HB 5142. The small gas cylinders are both hard to recycle, and are dangerous to throw in either bin as there is often gas left in the chamber that could cause an explosion. There is currently no good way to dispose of them and they cost individuals, businesses, and municipalities. Creating an extended producer responsibility for the life cycle eases these burdens, and potentially creates jobs and industry.

## **SB 115- An Act Concerning Extended Producer Responsibility for Consumer Packaging**

Sierra Club Connecticut opposes this bill in its current form. We would like to support an environmentally sound extended producer responsibility law in Connecticut, but as written, this bill is not that. The language that defines what can be considered recycling is highly problematic as it leaves open loopholes for chemical recycling within the definition of recycling in this bill.

Chemical recycling, or 'advanced recycling', uses many steps with high heat and chemical processing to turn plastic into fuel to be burned. The production and burning of this fuel releases harmful toxics, such as benzene, lead and barium, into the air. These are associated with health concerns ranging from cancer to developmental toxicity to damage to multiple organs and puts communities around these facilities at risk. The current definition within this bill permits any process that involves plastic-to-fuel as long as some of that fuel is turned back into raw material. An effective EPR program must ban any plastic-to-fuel process if any portion of that fuel is combusted.

To earn our support, we ask that you remove the second and third sentences in Section 1(12) (the definition of "Recycling") and replace them with the following: "Recycling" does not include landfill disposal, incineration, combustion, pyrolysis, gasification, or any thermal treatment process that produces gaseous, liquid, or solid product of which any portion is combusted or incinerated as a part of the thermal treatment process or at any point thereafter."

Rhode Island and Massachusetts have opposed similar efforts to allow chemical recycling. We urge the Committee to address the definition of recycling in this bill.

## **HB 5143- An Act Establish an Office of Aquatic Invasive Species**

Sierra Club Connecticut supports HB 5143. The creation of an office of aquatic invasive species within the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station is a good fit to increase research on control strategies, post treatment restoration, and early detection of invasive species. We hope there will be increased monitoring of herbicides used to control aquatic invasives to ensure they are not harming the local ecosystem and wildlife.

Thank you for consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

Ann Gadwah, Advocacy and Outreach Organizer  
Sierra Club Connecticut